ISTANBUL EUROPE CLUSTER'S FIRST DIRECT COLLECTIVE TEACHING PROJECT
15th -19th October 2008

RESULTS

How many teams were active during the project:
1st day: 6, **2nd day**: 5, **3rd day**: 6, **4th day**: 3, **5th day**: 6 teams worked

How many home visits:
27 mostly to the community of interest we had in the neighborhood.

How many people have been taught: 72

The goal of the Area Teaching Committee was to reach 500 people and get 20 declarations. We have been very much under the goal due to the numbers of the participants to the project not being enough and there were only 2-3 people everyday full time participating others have participated part time. There are some other contributing factors to this which is explained in detail in challenges part of this report.

- **How many people have listened to Anna's presentation:** 49 people.
- **How many people have listened to Anna's presentation fully and partially:**
  Fully: 20 people, Partially: 37 people.
- **How many people enrolled in Study Circles**: 11 people.
- **How many people have participated to the night programs**: 11 people (new believers and community of interest)
- **How many enrollments**: During the project in 5 days 17 and following 3 days of the project 3 more declarations and we have reached to 20 and as of now 2 more declarations received during the consolidation phase. Total number: 22. The cycle continues.

LEARNINGS AND EXPERIENCES

- We have learned that only by using Anna's presentation we are effective in teaching work and getting enrollments. It is very important to memorize at least the first two presentations and then go to written material (we have printed Anna's presentation as a table calendar) in order to look natural for listener. If we see that the seeker is listening then we say that I would like to share a quotation with you and take the written material to hand. After inviting the seeker and doing the presentation all the way to the 3rd presentation (life of Baha'u'llah) memorized, make us look more natural in presenting the presentation rather than reading all from the beginning from the booklet. At least we make a natural entry to the presentation by doing the first two section - memorized.
- We have noticed it is not that easy to adapt - embracing Anna's approach. Still some of us bring in our old habits to the teaching work. When talking to seekers we should avoid phrases and expressions that creates 'you' and 'us' or Baha'is-non Baha'is

difference. Rather then saying ‘In the Baha’i Faith it is like this or that’ focus people’s attention like Anna to the Manifestation of God: Baha’u’llah and say ‘One of the principles of Baha’u’llah is’. We have seen that this way is more effective and do not put obstacles to the hearts.

- In this project street teaching approach have been used two times only and brought one declaration. Mostly we have focused to our community of interest using Anna’s presentation.

- In the apartment building where the project took place (2 Bahai families live in the same apartment building) 5 families have been invited and taught the Faith and one family declared. In the same street two more families embraced the Faith.
- Consolidation have started from day 1 when we started getting declarations even right after we have finished Anna’s presentation with them, we have started Ruhi book 1 without book by sharing quotations from the small cards in our hands.
- It has been seen that when consolidation starts right away it is possible to move on very quickly. For example for some new believers it took only two days to complete Anna’s presentation, deepening sections(from book 2), and finish two sections of Ruhi book 1 of the first chapter. We have gained a good understanding in this project about teaching and consolidation being hand in hand. It was quite remarkable to hear from one of the new believers saying that she is so used to see us every night and quite happy about it.
- We have gained an understanding about the word “receptive” in this project. People are ready when we focus our energies to a receptive area and receptive souls, they are so quick to grasp the necessities of the Faith and understand their duties in te Faith and start moving. The last day of the project, we have celebrated together with our new Baha’is the birthday of the Bab at the headquarter/center and explained to them the significance of the Day. They understood everything; it was so natural for them. After prayers we put traditional Turkish music and did folk dancing. It was the celebration of the project also, we were so lucky that it came to the same day of the birthday of Bab.
- During the project all the participants have slept few hours only and really experienced the joy of teaching. Even though we could not sleep at the headquarter together, we had 3 meals together in the center. There was a great collective feeling, whole cluster was praying (those friends who could not participate to the project personally have joined the prayer chains or contributed to the teaching project).

CHALLENGES

- It was the first collective direct teaching project of the cluster. None of the institutions members had experience about it, except reading the reports of other clusters and the collaboration and the orientation given by the Counsellors, Auxiliary Board member and Resource Person Zeynep Baki.

- The participation number to the project every day was around 15 believers and some of the friends came from long distances and far corners of the city to participate to the project. Istanbul is a city of great transportation problems. Traffic is very heavy, public transportation system is most of the time not that efficient. Where the project took place was not that easy to reach but it was chosen because it is a receptive area and receptive population. Therefore friends participated to the project through prayer chain or with their contributions, we did not achieve our goal of friends participating to the project themselves as the cluster in large. ATC will consult about how can we overcome the obstacles and achieve larger participation of the friends for the next project.
- In the next cycle's teaching project based on experiences acquired from this project, we might test our strength to have 2 or 3 teaching projects in different areas of the cluster so maybe participation of the friends could be easier.
- As ATC even though we have indeed desired and pre-planned in finding a suitable headquarter/center, we could not put in action a project such as Ulaanbaatar model which has one centre that friends stay together.
- We had good number of enrollments which could increase (our goal was 35 by the end of cycle) by the end of the cycle. We did not experience street or door to door

teaching. Our community of interest took all of our time, as full time teams were only one or two, and others had only limited time (mostly part time) to offer for the project. Through the experience of this project we became more efficient in sharing Anna's presentation. Despite all the conditions and unplanned developments, success of this 5 day teaching project was due to the unity that existed among friends and always praying and being positive.

- Due to socio-economic situation of the area we have chosen, new believers were not willing to invite us to their homes (maybe thinking that they are poor and do not have much to offer, and it a custom in the culture to prepare things for the guests) but they were willing to come to the center and attend to program when invited. This created one problem for us---when the teams came together for the evaluation of the day this could not be done thoroughly as the new believers were really willing to stay over due to great friendly and spiritual atmosphere that was created and stayed till late hours (it would not have been proper and reflect a good spirit to ask them to leave). We also paid attention after our program is over to develop a sincere friendship with them. Therefore evaluation was left to the next morning or ATC secretary was taking notes individually talking to the teams. We could only meet during the evenings. The center did not have another room to offer to us for evaluation to take place. We also used to take down the map and daily results sheet from the wall of the center when we had guests.

- The social economic situation of people is poor they would prefer to come where we invite them rather then host people after first home visit to their house.
- The sacrifice of the friends were great some of them even woke up early and arranged to meet people for breakfast before they headed for the work, at dawn of the day in order to do Anna’s presentation.
- By the help of the Blessed Beauty we have reached our goal of declarations despite all the conditions. As ATC members I can say that we have developed a great love, appreciation, respect for each other and developed a great friendship. We really enjoy serving together, Although none of us were full time, and our task was great, the divine Hand of God was over us we truly felt it.

RECENT RESULTS

- One recent development after 3 weeks: 7 of the new believers in Gazi Osmanpasa (Gazi Mahallesi) area who have declared (10 people declared from that area) have been invited to the celebration of the Birthday of Baha’u’llah (86 participants) and they have all participated and met the Baha’is of their Local Spiritual Assembly area so their integration to the community is also done. They were ready for this as they have been participating to Ruhi 1 course and have received all the six deepening topics of Book 2. Local Assembly Secretary will invite them to the 19 Days Feast and other activities from now on.
- At the moment 10 people out of 22 new believers are in the institute process.